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Kansas City Kansas Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. Announces Annual Award Winners at Tourism Celebration on May 1, 2013

Kansas City, KS....The Kansas City Kansas Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc (KCK CVB) celebrated another successful year at its annual Tourism Celebration on Wednesday, May 1, 2013. The luncheon was held at the Jack Reardon Convention Center, 500 Minnesota Ave., in Kansas City, KS. Approximately 150 people were in attendance, including elected officials and tourism industry professionals. Five awards were presented to the following advocates and organizations.

The **Cultural Awareness Award** was presented to Nathan Barnes for his commitment and desire to assure that all cultures represented in Wyandotte County be preserved and honored. The award was presented by Trish Schurkamp, Wyandotte County Museum Director. For the last 18 years, Nathan has served District 1 in Kansas City KS as a Unified Government Commissioner. Nathan also has served on the Board of Directors for the KCK CVB and the Wyandotte County Museum board.

The **Excellence in Hospitality Award** was presented to Kara Brady, sales manager with Konover Hotel Corporation. The award was presented by the staff of the KCKCVB. Kara represents two KCK properties located in the Village West area, the Holiday Inn Express and Hampton Inn. This award recognized Kara for her support and partnership with the bureau while showing professionalism, hospitality and exceptional customer service to all visitors.

The **Tourism Event of the Year Award** was presented to The American Royal. The award was presented by Kurt Mayo, General Manager of the Hilton Garden Inn and a KCK CVB Board of Directors member. The American Royal was honored for being one of the oldest and most loved Kansas City traditions. Each fall the Royal hosts more than a quarter of a million people at its annual shows, with an economic footprint of over \$60 million a year. The award was accepted by Bob Petersen, President and CEO of the American Royal.

The **Tourism Organization of the Year Award** was presented to Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway. The award was presented by Chris Browne, General Manager of the Kansas City T-Bones and the Vice-Chair of the KCKCVB Board of Directors. The Hollywood Casino opened February 3, 2012. The casino employs 750 people, of which 40% are Wyandotte County residents and 35% are minorities. Recently the Unified Government received over \$4.5 million from gaming revenue and \$1.1 million was donated by the casino to local schools, parks and recreation, and charitable and social services. The award was accepted by Bob Sheldon, Vice president and General Manager for Hollywood Casino.

The **Tourism Advocate of the Year Award** was presented to John Mendez. The award was presented by Jimmy Lopez, Retail Marketing Manager Cabela's Kansas City and the current Chairman of the KCK CVB Board of Directors. John was honored for his many years of support for the tourism and hospitality industry in Kansas City. John was a Commissioner at Large, District 2 for the Unified Government and has played a vital role in the development of the KCK CVB. John was thanked for his willingness to step up and represent the bureau and the tourism industry.